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E REPUTATION OF ABRAHAM
COWLEY (1660-1800)

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XXVIII. THE REPUTATION OF ABRAHAM COWLEY (1660-1800)

When Abraham Cowley died in 1667, he was mourned by practically the whole English literary world with such eulogies as the following:

His Body . . . lies near the Ashes of *Chaucer* and *Spenser*, the two most Famous *English* Poets of Former Times. But whoever would do him right should not only equal him to the Principal Ancient Writers of our own Nation, but should also rank his name amongst the Authors of the true Antiquity, the best of the *Greeks* and *Romans*.¹

With this dictum, however, compare one or two modern specimens of Cowley criticism:

Cowley's eccentric Pindaric odes fell into disrepute toward the close of the century. Yet Thomas Flatman, one of the very few lyrists who wrote with high seriousness at the end of the century, followed Cowley almost exclusively. Flatman's friends, Dr. Samuel Woodford, the Spenserian, and Katherine Philips, "the matchless Orinda," wrote often in the manner of Cowley. . . . Finally Dryden, who was to give the deathblow to Abraham Cowley, wrote one of his maturest poems, *To Mrs. Anne Killigrew*, (1686) in the Pindaric and metaphysical vein of the despised poet. . . . We gloat over the damnation of the once revered Cowley [in the "Preface to the Fables"]. . . .²

Others do not put the damnation quite so early:

It begins to appear, for example, as if Tennyson were succeeding to Pope's position as a phenomenon sufficiently considered by English critics and now definitely disposed of and laid away. Cowley was similarly treated by the mid eighteenth century. . . .³

¹ Bishop Thos. Sprat, "Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley" (1668), in Spingarn, *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Cent.* (Oxford, 1908), II, 145.

² Herbert Cory, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser* (Berkeley, 1911), pp. 111, 117.

³ W. H. Durham, *Crit. Essays of the XVIIIth Cent.* (New Haven, 1915), Introd., pp. ix-x.

There is no doubt a considerable amount of truth in these remarks, and yet it is entirely unfair to twist such unsupported assertions into condemnations of Cowley by the age following him; for Cowley never actually received his "death-blow," either from the "mid-eighteenth century," or, least of all, from Dryden.

Nevertheless, in the study of Cowley's reputation several starts have been made in the right direction, at least one of which attempts to be more than a superficial generalization, unsupported by evidence. In the merely appreciative class falls Edmund Gosse's chapter on Cowley in his *Seventeenth Century Studies*, beginning thus:

The period of English poetry which lies between the decline of Ben Jonson and the rise of Dryden was ruled with undisputed sway by a man whose works are now as little read as those of any fifth-rate Elizabethan dramatist. During the whole lifetime of Milton, the fame of that glorious poet was obscured and dwarfed by the exaggerated reputation of this writer. . . . Yet in a very short space [the] work of destruction was most thoroughly done. The generation of Dryden admired his genius passionately, but not without criticism. The generation of Pope praised him coldly, but without reading him, and within fifty years of his own decease this nonpareil of the Restoration fell into total disfavour and oblivion. . . .⁴

A considerable improvement over the pleasantly inaccurate work of Mr. Gosse is to be found in the rather discursive introduction to Grosart's edition of Cowley, for here at length is an attempt at a historical survey of the statements concerning Cowley's real fame.

Accordingly, in the light of these earlier and later and present day opinions and feelings, such supercilious assumption as that of Mr. T. H. Ward, M.A., in his 'Selections from the English Poets' (4 vols. 1880), that Cowley is to be 'pooh-pooh'd' and held as irrevocably 'effaced,' is to my mind the superlative of uncritical and shallow mis-judgment, and a literary blunder and offence combined. I must confess, too, that there is an element of the *grotesque* in my friend Mr. EDMUND W. GOSSE's fancy that *he* is the 'last of his admirers'; for, as I believe, there has never been a generation since he died, in which Cowley has not had an inner circle of readers and students, so in this living present they are co-equal in number with those

⁴ Gosse, *op. cit.* (N. Y., 1897), p. 191.

who really 'intermeddle' with and care for our early literature. . . . Cowley is as 'humble' but no humbler to-day than in his lifetime, and stands as worthy of his contemporary homage as ever. . . .⁴

The writer then says that he can accept Dryden's phrase, "sunk in his reputation," only in part, disproving it by a citation of editions and calling attention to the fact that Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, and Sir Thomas Browne were probably selling no faster. In addition, he quotes many of the principal seventeenth and eighteenth century opinions of Cowley, and, altogether, makes a very important contribution to the field of Cowley criticism.

But apparently not one of these writers has done what could and should have been done, and what it is the purpose of this paper to do; namely, to trace Cowley's real reputation and popularity thru the Neo-Classical period, giving as many contemporary opinions as space will permit, summarizing and grouping others, and explaining as far as possible the probable reasons for the treatment accorded him by the age succeeding his own. For if after Cowley's death an age had followed with different standards, different ideas, and a different "psychology" from those of the Neo-Classical period, it is certain that the "despised poet" would occupy a somewhat higher position in literature today.

The history of Cowley's reputation falls into three main stages which follow pretty closely the development of the times: (I) The Height of Cowley's Reputation (from about 1660 to about 1700, an age of transition, in which "Classicism" had its beginnings); (II) The Development of the Critical Attitude toward Cowley (from about 1701 to about 1745, in which the Neo-Classical spirit prevailed in large measure, altho with great diversity); and (III) Scholarly Criticism of Cowley (from about 1746 to about 1800, during which new currents of thought began to make their influence felt, all terminating shortly after the begin-

⁴ Grosart, *op. cit.* (Chertsey Worthies', 1881), I, xxxiii-iv.

ning of the French Revolution in another school of poetry insisting on its own newness).

Within these main chronological periods the material to be considered may be subdivided according to Cowley's writings, which fall into five large groups: (1) all his poetry which was based on older and classical models, including his Latin poetry, his Anacreontics, and, most important, his "Pindaric" odes (with which will be treated his regular odes); (2) his other lyrics, especially his love-verse, collected in *The Mistress*; (3) his unfinished biblical epic, *Dauides*; (4) his plays, English and Latin, which are of comparatively little importance; and (5) his prose, best represented by his essays (including the verse written with them), but also including his prefaces, his notes to the *Dauides*, his *Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy*, his *Discourse by Way of Vision concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell*, and his letters. In addition there was in each period a considerable amount of material which concerned itself with none of Cowley's writings in particular, but was simply general, though none the less valuable, criticism.

As actual criticism of Cowley began to make its appearance the important thing to observe is, that it was *discriminative* criticism. References by the same author are sometimes favorable and sometimes unfavorable; indeed, authors often contradict themselves at different stages of their careers or even in different parts of the same work. They choose certain of Cowley's qualities for praise, while they censure others; they reject all, or parts, of certain writings, while they laud others highly. Sometimes this is done in separate passages, and sometimes in a single review, but it is never safe to count on a man's final verdict without having consulted the major part of his work. Finally, another large class of references is non-critical in nature, being composed merely of allusions, quotations, etc., which show nothing except that Cowley was still read and known; but

it will be outside the scope of this article to deal with any of these except by figures and statistics.

I. THE HEIGHT OF COWLEY'S REPUTATION (1660-1700)

It is a fact of some significance that in this first period there were apparently no unfavorable comments of a general nature upon Cowley, altho, to be sure, there were two or three of some importance which discriminated in their criticism. Many of these comments took the brief, adjectival form such as appeared in the remarks of the two diarists, Evelyn and Pepys, upon Cowley's death—Evelyn speaking of "that incomparable poet and virtuous man, my very dear friend,"⁶ and Pepys of hearing the Bishop of Winchester and Dr. Bates lament Cowley as "the best poet of our nation, and as good a man."⁷ The praises of Bishop Sprat's biography in 1668, however, were the most complete and extreme of all. This earliest specimen of really formal English literary biography began thus:

For certainly, in all Antient or Modern Times, there can scarce any Authour be found, that has handled so many different Matters in such various sort of Style, who less wants the correction of his Friends, or has less reason to fear the severity of Strangers. . . .⁸

The eulogistic tone of his criticism is also seen in the following passage:

In his life he join'd the innocence and sincerity of the Scholar with the humanity and good behaviour of the Courtier. In his Poems he united the Solidity and Art of the one with the Gentility and Gracefulness of the other. . . .

His Fancy flow'd with great speed, and therefore it was very fortunate to him that his Judgment was equal to manage it. . . . His Invention is powerful and large as can be desir'd. But it seems all to arise out of the Nature of the subject, and to be just fitted for the thing of which he speaks. If ever he goes far for it, he dissembles his pains admirably well.⁹

⁶ Evelyn, *Diary*, Aug. 1, 1667.

⁷ Pepys, *Diary*, Aug. 12, 1667.

⁸ Sprat, *op cit.*, p. 119. Sprat also had an adulatory ode on Cowley.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-30.

There is a tacit confession in this last, nevertheless, that the accusation of being "far-fetched" had already been applied to Cowley, just as, a paragraph or so before, the defence of Cowley's "numbers" shows that the fault of "ruggedness" was also being laid at his door.

Innumerable encomiastic verse and prose catalogs of English poets, the inheritance of the later Renaissance, also furnish much material concerning Cowley. Of this type was a poem by Knightly Chetwood (1684):

Such was the case when Chaucer's early toil
Founded the Muses' empire in our soil.
Spenser improv'd it with his painful hand,
But lost a noble Muse in fairy-land.
Shakespear said all that Nature could impart,
And Jonson added Industry and Art.
Cowley and Denham gain'd immortal praise. . . .¹⁰

Dozens of similar passages might be cited, but there is so much resemblance between them all that they soon become monotonous.¹¹

1. *Latin Poetry, Anacreontics, Pindarics, etc.*

Cowley was noted for his classical and scholarly attainments, which were reflected in his writings in various ways. The only important one of these to the modern student or reader is his "translation" of the odes of Pindar by a method which popularized the irregular ode in English. However, in the Restoration and eighteenth century the ability to write elegantly in Latin was also esteemed highly, and this ability Cowley possessed to an eminent degree. Sprat praised him for it, commending his power to keep both his

¹⁰ "To the Earl of Roscommon," prefixed to Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse*; in Chalmers's *English Poets* (London, 1810), VIII, 264.

¹¹ E.g., Denham, *Works of Waller and Denham* (Edinburgh, 1869), pp. 255-8; Oldham, *Works* (London, 1684), p. 82; Langbaine, "Pref.," *Dram. Poets* (Oxford, 1691), p. a4; *Athenian Mercury*, July 11, 1691, II, 263; Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Mod. Learning*, in Spingarn, III, 206-7; anon., *Miscellany Poems and Translations by Oxford Hands* (London, 1685), p. 155; etc.

English and his Latin pure from each other, as well as his command over both prose and verse; in fact, he even went so far as to claim for his subject a positive superiority over the ancients themselves in the variety and versification of his Latin work.¹² In 1689, Nahum Tate, in his preface to the translation of Cowley's *Plantarum*, adulated "*the mighty Genius of COWLEY himself*," "*the Treasures of his Divine Fancy*," etc.¹³ Again, in 1692, the *Athenian Mercury* defended one of Cowley's metaphors in the same work, at the same time vindicating, against Father Bouhours, one by the Spanish "metaphysical," Gongora.¹⁴

One class of Cowley's "imitative" writings which was destined to increase in favor and recognition was his Anacreontics, altho in this first period few mentions were made of these. Prior's couplet, however, probably written about 1686-8, was perhaps representative of the general opinion:

In vain we from our sonnetteers [sic] require,
The height of Cowley's and Anacreon's lyre.¹⁵

More was written about Cowley's odes, however, than about any other single class of his works. Denham's elegy in 1667 lauded all of Cowley's poetry, but especially his "emulation" of "Horace's wit and Virgil's state"; moreover, "our swan" rose to the same pitch as "old Pindar's flights."¹⁶ Sprat ran no risks in proclaiming that Cowley performed the English imitation of Pindar "without the danger that *Horace* presag'd to the Man who should dare attempt it," but for some obscure reason praised "this inequality of number" for "its near affinity with Prose." He also recognized that Cowley was not the first to adopt this method

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 129-30, 134-5.

¹³ Tate, "Epistle-Dedicatory," in Grosart's *Cowley*, II, 240.

¹⁴ *Ath. Mer.* (Apr. 2, 1692), VII, 2. The passage is interesting not only because it contains one of the extremely rare references to Gongora, but because it couples Cowley with him.

¹⁵ M. Prior, "Sat. on the Poets," *Works* (London and N. Y., 1892), II, 377.

¹⁶ Denham, "On Mr. Abraham Cowley," *op. cit.*, pp. 255-8.

of translating, but claimed the power of Cowley's example over later poets.¹⁷ Edward Phillips, in 1675, called Cowley "the most applauded poet of our nation both of the present and past ages" (here agreeing with the reports about his uncle Milton's, predilection for the same writer), and was also one of the first to record his observation that Cowley had not followed Pindar's form; moreover, "a notable trade hath been driven of late in Pindaric odes" in imitation of him.¹⁸

The opinions of such large figures as Dryden, Addison, and Swift, and those of one or two minor men, such as Mulgrave and Flatman, will have to represent the rest of the general public. In 1677, Dryden defended the "fustian, as they call it," in Cowley's odes, apologizing for himself as "unworthy to defend so excellent an author."¹⁹ In 1680 he recurred to the subject in connection with his own translations, praising Cowley for his "imitation," but warning of the dangers to other "writers of unequal parts to him. . . . A genius so elevated and unconfined as Mr. Cowley's, was but necessary to make Pindar speak English."²⁰ Nevertheless, by 1685, Dryden had slightly modified his position, so that he followed the criticism voiced by the Earl of Mulgrave in 1682 on the score of "ill-expression":

Every one knows it [Pindaric verse] was introduced into our language, in this age, by the happy genius of Mr. Cowley. . . . It languishes in almost every hand but his. . . . But if I may be allowed to speak my mind

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-2.

¹⁸ Phillips, "Cowley," *Theatrum Poetarum* (Geneva, 1824), pp. 32-3. Compare the note by the present writer in *Mod. Phil.* (Aug., 1921), XIX, 107-9; for other passages, between the dates of Phillips and Congreve (1706), which recognize the difference in form, see Wm. Winstanley, *Lives . . . of the . . . Poets* (London, 1687), pp. 182-3; Dryden, Letter to Dennis, c. Mar., 1694, *Works* (ed. Scott and Saintsbury, Edin., 1883), XVIII, 117 8; *Ath. Mer.* (Dec. 26, 1694), XVI, 3; Tom Brown, "Commonplace Book," (bf. 1704), *Works* (London, 1730), III, 237. Also, for a possible source of Phillips's own remark, compare Milton's preface to *Samson Agonistes*.

¹⁹ "Heroic Poetry," *Essays* (ed. Ker, Oxford, 1900), I, 186.

²⁰ "Preface to Ovid," *op. cit.*, I, 239-40.

modestly, and without injury to his sacred ashes, somewhat of the purity of English, somewhat of more equal thoughts, somewhat of sweetness in the numbers, . . . is yet wanting. As for the soul of it, which consists in the warmth and vigour of fancy, the masterly figures, and the copiousness of imagination, he has excelled all others in this kind.²¹

That this discriminative tone of Dryden's criticism was typical of him was shown in two further passages, one of which, in 1693, called the Pindarics and latter compositions "undoubtedly the best of his poems, and the most correct,"²² and the other, in 1697, referred to his own translations in these terms:

I say nothing of Sir John Denham, Mr. Waller, and Mr. Cowley; 'tis the utmost of my ambition to be thought their equal, or not to be much inferior to them, and some others of the living.²³

Addison's youthful criticism in 1694²⁴ showed more perspicacity than Mr. Courthope is willing to acknowledge,²⁵ for Addison blamed Cowley's lavish wit, while he praised him for fitting "the deep-mouth'd Pindar to thy lyre", and these dicta he never retracted. Moreover, Flatman's Pindaric on "Samuel Woodford's Version of the Psalms" showed how Cowley was still regarded toward the end of the century:

*Bold man, that dares attempt Pindarick verse,
Since the great Pindar's greatest Son
From the immortal Age is gon;
Cowley has bid th' immortal Age Adieu!
Apollo's rare Columbus, He
Found out new Worlds of Poetry;
He, li' an Eagle, soar'd aloft,
To seize his noble prey [etc.]²⁶*

²¹ "Preface to *Sylvarum*," *op. cit.* I, 267. For Mulgrave's poem, see "An Essay upon Poetry," in Spingarn, II, 289.

²² "Orig. and Prog. of Sat.," *ibid.*, II, 19.

²³ "Ded. of the *Annals*," *ibid.*, II, 222.

²⁴ "Account of the Greatest English Poets," *Works* (London, 1854), I, 23-4.

²⁵ Courthope, *Addison* (E. M. L., N. Y., 1884), p. 32.

²⁶ Quoted in Sir Thomas Pope Blount, *Dr. R. Poetica* (London, 1694), pt. 2, p. 54.

Flatman, like many of his contemporaries, appreciated Cowley for causes not usually associated with the Neo-Classical period—i.e., for his originality, and for his “soaring” qualities. Finally, another characteristic not always associated with the period—its lack of unity—is illustrated by Swift’s *Battle of the Books*, for here Swift went diametrically against Dryden’s verdict when, in a spirited narrative, he made Pindar destroy Cowley’s Pindaric part, leaving only the *Mistress* to posterity.²⁷

2. *The Mistress and Other Lyrics*

Much more adverse criticism of Cowley is centered upon the *Mistress* than people often realize, and the body of this criticism constantly grew. The judgment of the public on Cowley’s lyrics in general, however, during his own lifetime, was probably reflected by Dryden in 1665 when, speaking of how the modern English surpassed the ancients in epic or lyric poetry, he wrote that there was “nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit, as Mr. Cowley . . .”²⁸ Sprat, more specifically, was not “asham’d to commend Mr. Cowley’s *Mistress*,” altho he did wish that one or two expressions had been “left out.”

But of all the rest I dare boldly pronounce, that never yet so much was written on a subject so Delicate, that can less offend the severest rules of Morality. The whole Passion of Love is inimitably describ’d, with all its mighty Train of Hopes, and Joys, and Disquiets. Besides this amorous tenderness, I know not how in every Copy there is something of more useful Knowledge very naturally and gracefully insinuated, and every where there may be something found to inform the minds of wise Men as well as to move the hearts of young Men or Women.²⁹

But here again the Bishop tacitly confessed a reaction; and as a matter of fact there did appear, in 1670, an *Exclamation against an Apology for Cowley’s Verses*, in which the Rev.

²⁷ *Prose Works* (ed. Scott, London, 1897-1908), I, 181-2.

²⁸ “Dramatic Poesy,” *op. cit.*, I, 35.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

Edmund Elys condemned the love-poetry for lasciviousness.³⁰ The same charge was brought again by William Walsh in 1692, but his accusations in his *Letters and Poems, Amorous and Gallant* were valiantly and colloquially replied to two years later in Charles Gildon's "Essay at a Vindication of the Love-Verses of Cowley and Waller." Gildon massed his defence under the following heads of Walsh's attack:

1. *The Occasions on which the Poems are written are sought out, and that none meet with 'em but the ridiculous; all that of the Ancients are such as happen to a Merry Man in Love.*

2. *That the Verses, the Moderns, are filled with Thoughts that are indeed Surprising and Glittering, but not Tender, Passionate, or Natural for a Merry Man in Love to think.*³¹

Gildon confuted his opponent fairly well by citing passages from both the ancients, and the moderns under consideration, and also by defending the language, imagery, etc., of the latter. It is worth remarking, too, that especially at this time Gildon was an enthusiastic follower of Dryden, and also appealed to Locke and Le Clerc in his upholding of extravagant figures. In conclusion, it will be remembered that Swift gave the command of his modern "light-horse" in the *Battle of the Books* to "Cowley and Despreaux," and finally decided that the *Mistress* was better than the *Pin-darics*.³²

3. *The Davideis*

Cowley's uncompleted epic seems to have been even more widely and more favorably known in this first period than were his lyrics, but at the same time, particularly toward the end of the century, the critical attitude was developing. Sprat, as usual, will not "pretend to a profess'd Panegyrick," but still "will affirm, that it [*Davideis*] is a better instance and beginning of a Divine Poem than I ever yet saw in any Language."

³⁰ See Grosart, I, li.

³¹ Gildon, in Durham, pp. 4 ff.

³² *Op. cit.*, I, 172; 181-2.

. . . in other matters his Wit excell'd most other mens; but in his Moral and Divine Works it outdid it self. And no doubt it proceeded from this Cause, that in other lighter kinds of Poetry he chiefly represented the humours and affections of others; but in these he sat to himself and drew the figure of his own mind.³³

Thomas Rymer, one of the most thoro-going "Classicists" who ever wrote, in 1674 rated the *Davideis* above Tasso's "*Hierusalem*"; and also compared Cowley with Davenant:

A more happy *Genius* for *Heroick Poesie* appears in *Cowley*. He understood the *purity*, the *perspicuity*, the *majesty* of stile and the virtue of *numbers*. He could discern what was beautiful and pleasant in Nature, and could express his thoughts without the least difficulty or constraint. He understood to dispose of the matters, and to manage his Digressions. In short, he understood *Homer* and *Virgil*, and as prudently made his advantage of them.

Yet as it might be lamented that he carried not on the work so far as he design'd, so it might be wish'd that he had lived to revise what he did leave us.

Nevertheless, Rymer would have been better pleased if Cowley had chosen one large action instead of several small ones, had not mixed the epic and lyric, and so on.³⁴ His point of view was well summed up four years later when, in his *Tragedies of the Last Age*, he wrote:

Nor will it, I hope, give offence that I handle these *Tragedies* with the same liberty that I formerly had taken in examining the *Epick Poems* of *Spencer*, *Cowley*, and such names as will ever be *sacred* to me.³⁵

The clerical attitude is reflected in Dr. Samuel Woodford's "Paraphrase upon the Psalms," 1679, in which Cowley's choice of the couplet form was commended over Davenant and Spenser, and then the entire poem was recommended as practically faultless.³⁶

In 1682, Mulgrave, while refusing to grant absolute success to any modern epic poet, still ranked Cowley, Milton,

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

³⁴ "Pref. to *Rupin*," in Spingarn, II, 171-3.

³⁵ In Spingarn, II, 186.

³⁶ See Blount, *op. cit.*, pt. 2, p. 53.

"Torquato," and Spenser as the leaders.³⁷ By the 1713 revision of the poem, however, the tide was turning quickly in the other direction, and the *Dauides* was no longer considered great enough to demand even a mention.

Finally, Dryden's attitude toward the *Dauides* underwent some changes, altho it was always critical and discriminative. In 1672 Dryden affirmed that Cowley's authority was "almost sacred" to him. Indeed, in 1667 he had based a short passage in his *Annus Mirabilis* on the *Dauides*, and continued to do the same thing in his translation of the *Aeneid* in 1697. In 1677, he analyzed wittily a couple of figures of speech taken from the epic; and in 1692 wrote his famous passage which has so often been taken for one of the dozen or so "death-blows" which Cowley was so constantly receiving:

I looked over the darling of my youth, the famous Cowley; there I found, instead of them [true turns on the word or thought], the points of wit, and quirks of epigram, even in the *Dauides*, an heroic poem, which is of an opposite nature to these puerilities; but no elegant turns either on the word or on the thought.

Notice, however, what Dryden carefully added, and what is often overlooked, when he also turned (vainly) to Milton in his search: "Then I consulted a greater genius [Milton] (without offence to the *Manes* of that noble author)," i.e., Cowley. It is clear that Dryden was not consciously or voluntarily dealing death-blows in his references to Cowley, especially when one considers that Dryden explicitly stated, a dozen lines or so above, that all this happened "about twenty years ago," and when one recalls all of Dryden's criticisms during those twenty years.³⁸

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, in Spingarn, II, 296.

³⁸ See, for these respective references in Dryden: "Of Heroic Plays," *op. cit.*, I, 154; E. Settle, quoted in Johnson, *Lives of the Poets* (ed. Hill, Oxford, 1905), I, 354; J. M. McBryde, *Study of Cowley's Dauides* (Johns Hopkins Dissertation, 1899), pp. 64-5; Dryden, "Heroic Poetry," *op. cit.*, I, 184, 188; and "Orig. and Prog. of Sat.," *ibid.*, II, 108-9.

4. *The Plays*

Cowley's plays may be dismissed quickly, altho it is a curious fact that the tone of the few mentions we have of them is favorable. Pepys mentioned reading "a Latin play, the *Naufragium Joculare*,"³⁹ and also recorded the first presentation of *The Cutter of Coleman-Street*: "A very good play it is—it seems of Cowley's making."⁴⁰ Downes, the prompter at the "Opera," also spoke of the humorous treatment of the "Fanaticks" of 1658, of the dullness of the "serious scenes," but of the general interest of the whole. That the play was not popular at first because it was considered as a satire on the Cavaliers was also recorded by Downes, who added that it was later revived with considerable success.⁴¹ For some reason, Sprat did not even mention Cowley as a dramatist. Gerard Langbaine, however, in 1691 gave the additional information that the *Cutter* had been acted at Cambridge (in its earlier form of *The Guardian*, 1641-2), and also privately during the closing of the theaters, as well as publicly at Dublin—and always with applause.⁴²

5. *The Prose*

The work for which Cowley is most generally appreciated today is his prose, and yet it is true that his recognition in this field came rather slowly. In the later seventeenth century scarcely a reference to it is discoverable, except in Sprat, who first commended the excellence of Cowley's letters to his private friends, and then pointed out the difference between the essays and the verse as follows:

The last Pieces that we have from his hands are Discourses, by way of Essays, upon some of the gravest subjects that concern the Contentment of a Virtuous Mind. These he intended as a real Character of his own

³⁹ *Diary*, Feb. 19, 1660-1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1661.

⁴¹ See Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage* (London, 1832), I, 40.

⁴² *Dramatic Poets* (Oxford, 1691), p. 81; this account is based on Cowley's own 1663 preface.

thoughts upon the point of his Retirement. And accordingly you may observe in the Prose of them there is little Curiosity of Ornament, but they are written in a lower and humbler style than the rest, and as an unfeigned Image of his Soul should be drawn without Flattery. I do not speak this to their disadvantage. For the true perfection of Wit is to be pleyable to all occasions, to walk or flye, according to the Nature of every subject.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, Cowley cared more to "flye" than to walk.

Cowley's incipient critical ability had also been noticed by 1685, in an anonymous translator's preface, "A Short History of Criticism":

Cowley was a great master of the *Antients*, and had the true *Genius* and Character of a Poet; yet this nicety and boldness of Criticism was a stranger all this time to our Climate.⁴⁵

Two additional, and minor, references, show that other of Cowley's prose works were at least known. In 1690, occurred one reference to Cowley's 1656 "Preface" to his first collected edition,⁴⁶ and in 1697 Dryden mentioned the poem following the essay "Of Agriculture."⁴⁶ These practically tell the tale.

That the predominant tone of criticism from 1660 to 1700 was appreciative would be more than ever clear if all the available quotations could be given. But the critical and discriminative attitude which the next period was to develop had also been born—a judicial viewpoint which is best represented in the greatest figure of the age, Dryden. In 1676 Dryden was accustomed to speak of "my better master Cowley";⁴⁷ in 1700, the year of his death, he sum-

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 137-8.

⁴⁵ "Pref." to *Miscellaneous Essays Written Originally in the French by the Sieur de Saint Exremont*, in Ker, *Dryden*, II, 313.

⁴⁶ "Pref." to 2nd part of Waller's *Poems*; reprinted in Fenton's ed. of Waller (London, 1744), p. 292.

⁴⁷ "Postscript to the *Aeneis*," *op. cit.*, II, 244.

⁴⁸ "Ded. to *Aurung-zebe*," *Works* (ed. Scott and Saintsbury, Edin., 1883), V, 194.

marized his ultimate decision as follows, altho he mentioned no names:

One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept like a drag-net, great and small. . . . All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment. . . . For this reason, although he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions, which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth; for, as my last Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, *Not being of God, he could not stand*.

The first query to make of interpreters of this passage is to ask whether it is better to be "a great poet" or "a good writer." That Dryden intended this distinction to mean something is clear when, later in the same essay, he reiterated what he had often said before: "I dare not advance my opinion [about Chaucer] against the judgment of so great an author [Cowley]; but I think it fair, however, to leave the decision to the public."⁴⁸

The second query is to ask exactly what the public's decision, expressed in the concrete terms of editions, had been during the period covered by Dryden's remarks. Such a study of editions, both for this and for the succeeding periods, has apparently never been properly made.⁴⁹

The complete works which Cowley himself had been preparing were brought out in 1668, the year after his death, by Herringman. The *Poemata Latina* also appeared in 1668. From then on, the editions are rather confusing because of the combining of different parts of old editions to make new ones; but this very fact is proof of the demand. In 1669 appeared at least three versions of the 1668 works, with various errata, etc., corrected. In 1671-2 appeared

⁴⁸ "Pref. to the *Fables*," *op. cit.*, II, 258, 265.

⁴⁹ Mr. Gosse again seems to go astray here in his *Sev. Cent. Studies*, p. 192.—The present writer is indebted to Mr. G. F. Barwick of the British Museum for a list of additions to its printed catalog. Supplementary data have been obtained from the *Term Catalogs* (ed. Arber, London, 1903, 3 vols.), and from incidental sources.

the third edition; in 1674, the fourth, with a second part of juvenilia added by Harper in 1681. In 1675 *A Satyre against Separatists* [doubtful?] was reprinted in *Ad Populum*, and again in 1677. In 1678 appeared the fifth edition, with the second edition of the *Poemata Latina* in the same year. In 1678 and 1679 were published *Songs . . . Collected out of Some of the Select Poems by the Incomparable Mr. Cowley, and Others*. In the latter year also, "The Garden" was reprinted with Evelyn's *Sylva, or Kalendar* (as likewise in 1691, 1699, etc.), and in the same year, "A Poem on the Late Civil War."⁶⁰ In 1680 the sixth book of the *Plantarum* was translated. In 1680-1 appeared Herringman's sixth edition, and Harper brought out a second part in 1681-2. "The Puritan and the Papist, a Satyr" appeared in 1682 in *Wit and Loyalty Reviv'd*, and the Anacreontics in *Anacreon Done into English, etc.*, in 1683; the *Songs* were also reprinted in 1683. Another (unnumbered) edition of the works was brought out by Herringman in 1687-8, with the self-styled "sixth" by Harper in 1689, containing the translation of the *Plantarum*, altho Herringman had fostered a "seventh" in 1681, and an "eighth" in 1684. The seventh part of the "eighth," containing the *Cutter*, appeared in 1693. In 1700, the year of Dryden's remark, appeared editions of both the *Naufragium Joculare* and of the *Works*—the ninth.⁶¹

These facts speak for themselves. During the Restoration

⁶⁰ Concerning this poem, the "Publisher to the Reader" wrote: "*Meeting accidentally with this Poem in Manuscript, and being informed that it was a Piece of the incomparable Mr. A C's, I thought it unjust to hide such a Treasure from the World. . . . And there is not one careless stroke of his but what should be kept sacred to all Posterity. . . .*" And so on. (See A. R. Waller's ed. of Cowley, Cambr., 1906, II, 466.)

⁶¹ This edition, which must have been reprinted in 1704 ff. (see Grosart, I, xlvii), was prefaced by the following remarks of the booksellers concerning the early poems of Cowley just being printed: "The following Poems of Mr. Cowley being much enquir'd after, and very scarce, (the Town hardly affording one Book, tho' it hath Eight times been printed) we thought this Ninth Edition could not fail of being well received by the World. . . ."

Cowley was almost universally admired for all classes of his writing. Extravagant mental play for many years struck the Restoration mind, with its propensity toward liberty and freedom, as only a virtue. The occasional looseness of sentiment in the *Mistress* probably appealed to more readers than it offended. The Pindarics, too, broke away from the trammels of form and were controlled only by the flight of the writer's ideas. Roughness of rhythm outraged the ears of only a few early partisans of absolute smoothness and perfection of "numbers." The *Dauidicis* pleased those who were perhaps shocked by the *Mistress*. The beauties of English prose were just beginning to be remarked, and it was not until the next century that the qualities of simplicity, polish, gentility, and perspicacity began to be continually emphasized by "this age of taste."⁵²

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD COWLEY (1701-1745)

The Neo-Classical period seldom abandoned a matter until it had investigated it to the bottom. This was the way in which it treated Cowley. The very minor poet Higgons (but minor people are almost as important as major in a study of reputation) summed it up in a single couplet:

*'Tis but his Dross that's in the Grove,
His Memory Fame from Death shall save.*¹

Those who were most nearly literary dictators during the first part of the eighteenth century were Pope and the *Spectator* writers. In his juvenile "Windsor Forest" (1704) Pope had written:

⁵² The place accorded Cowley by the Restoration, compared with its opinion of the rest of the "Metaphysical Poets," may be seen in the present writer's forthcoming article, "The Reputation of the 'Metaphysical Poets' during the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Engl. and Ger. Phil.*

¹ "Ode upon the Death of Mr. Cowley," Tonson's 1707 ed., I, lxxiv.

Who now shall charm the shades, where Cowley strung
 Hi living harp, and lofty Denham sung?²

By the appearance of the "Essay on Criticism," about 1711, he had improved his analytical faculties so far as to compose the famous passage beginning:

Some to conceit alone their taste confine,
 And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at ev'ry line;
 Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit;
 One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit. . . .³

Altho this might be a just criticism of Cowley, and is usually construed as being pointed toward him,⁴ it must still be remembered that, as in Dryden, no names are mentioned. Moreover, like Dryden, Pope praised Cowley's poetic powers to the very end, as when, about 1734, he said, "Cowley is a fine poet, in spite of all his faults," and then added, undoubtedly basing his remark on Dryden, "He . . . borrowed his metaphysical style from Donne."⁵

To Addison was due the credit of the first complete analysis of Cowley's most peculiar trait, his wit. One quotation will suffice here, altho more will be said on the subject later:

Horace, Virgil, or Milton, so far as the Language of their Poems is understood, will please a Reader of plain common Sense, who would neither relish nor comprehend an Epigram of *Marital*, or a Poem of *Cowley*.⁶

A correspondent in Steele's paper of Aug. 10, 1711, followed in the footsteps of several predecessors when he wrote of the new taste in poetry:

² Pope, *Works* (ed. Elwin and Courthope, London, 1871 ff.), I, 357 (see also p. 356). The lines were allowed to stand at the publication in 1713.

³ *Op. cit.*, II, 50 ff.

⁴ For example, see W. L. Bowles's ed. of Pope (London, 1806), I, 234, n.; Sir A. W. Ward's ed. (London, 1911), p. 57, n.; etc.

⁵ See Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes, etc.* (ed. Singer, London, 1820), p. 173. For the history of the term "metaphysical" in this connection, see the present writer's article, "The Term 'Metaphysical Poets' before Johnson," *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXXVII (1922), 11-17.

⁶ *Spectator*, No. 70 (May 21, 1711).

The Admirers of what we call Point, or Turn, look upon it as the peculiar Happiness to which *Cowley*, *Ovid* and others owe their Reputation. . . . Now tho' such Authors appear to me to resemble those who make them selves fine, instead of being well dressed or graceful; yet the Mischief is that these Beauties in them, which I call Blemishes, are thought to proceed from Luxuriance of Fancy, and overflowing of good Sense: In one Word, they have the Character of being too Witty; but if you would acquaint the World they are not Witty at all. . . .⁷

This paradoxical charge was a severe one to make, and it and its like had their effect, but not universally, if the lesser known writers are examined.

Before this time, in 1713 (the work was probably composed about 1709), Henry Felton, D. D., of Oxford, had praised England more highly than Rome for bringing forth "the wonderful *Cowley's* Wit, who was beloved by every Muse he courted, and hath rivalled the *Greek* and *Latin* Poets in every Kind, but Tragedy."⁸ In 1710, Leonard Welsted continued the old catalog of poets:

Justly in death with those one mansion have,
Whose works redeem their glory from the grave;
Where venerable Chaucer's antient head,
And Spenser's much ador'd remains are laid;
Where Cowley's precious stone, and the proud mould
That glories Dryden's mortal parts to hold,
Command high reverence and devotion just
To their great relicks and distinguish'd dust.⁹

After this time, even more was made of Cowley's wit than

⁷ *Spect.*, No. 140.

⁸ *Dissertation on Reading the Classics, etc.* (London, 1723), pp. 30-1. Even more encomiastic than Felton was Edward Bysshe, in his very popular aid to plagiarism (or "imitation"), *The Art of English Poetry* (London, 1702). More of his "Collection of the Most Natural and Sublime Thoughts," etc., is drawn from Cowley than from any other poet, as many as half a dozen passages, from all classes of his writings, sometimes appearing on a single page. The difference made by six decades may be seen by comparing *A Poetical Dictionary* (sometimes ascribed to Goldsmith, London, 1761), which acknowledged a debt to Bysshe; in it, only four quotations from Cowley appeared in four volumes.

⁹ "Poem to the Memory of . . . Mr. J. Philips," *Works* (London, 1787), p. 24.

before. Typical of many of these criticisms were John Oldmixon's in his translation, or paraphrase (1728), of Bouhours' *La Manière de Bien Penser*; they may be represented partly by the following:

*I have made use of none but the best, whether they wrote in Verse or in Prose, the Faults of Great Men only being worth Observation, that those who have not their Talents may be upon their Guard; for if such Authors as Tacitus and Seneca among the Ancients, Tasso, Malherbe, Balsac, Cowley, and Dryden, among the Moderns, fall into the grossest Errors in Thinking, what have not meaner Genius's to fear from Negligence, and a worse Misfortune still, from Ignorance? . . . The Faults of great Men are like Land-Marks on Mountains, to direct Voyagers to avoid the Rocks and Shelves beneath them. . . .*¹⁰

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1739, could still praise Cowley, "an eminent genius of the last age," for not turning his wit to vice, and for possessing "so much Strength and Firmness of Mind, . . . as could not be perverted by the Largeness of [his] Wit, and was proof against the Art of Poetry itself."¹¹ A more intellectual, rational (and also unpoetical) temperament such as David Hume's, however, was affected differently:

It is a certain rule, that wit and passion are entirely incompatible. . . . We may also observe, that those compositions which we read the oftenest, and which every man of taste has got by heart, have the recommendation of simplicity, and have nothing surprising in the thought, when divested of that elegance of expression, and harmony of numbers, with which it is clothed. . . . It is sufficient to run over Cowley once; but Parnell[sic], after the fiftieth reading, is as fresh as at the first. . . .¹²

Everyone in 1741-2, however, did not prefer Parnell to Cowley.

1. *Latin Poetry, Anacreontics, Pindarics*

It is a remarkable, but apparently an unobserved, fact that in this period there were practically no direct and

¹⁰ *Arts of Logick and Rhetorick* (London, 1728): Preface, pp. xviii-ix.

¹¹ *Gent. Mag.*, IX, 285.

¹² Hume, "Simplicity and Refinement," *Essays* (London, 1870), pp. 115-6.

unqualifiedly unfavorable comments on this first class of Cowley's poetry. Felton praised the Latin poems, altho preferring the English, and at the same time styling Cowley "the most celebrated in both."¹³ Two references in the *Spectator* for 1712 show that the Anacreontics were still favorably known, the second passage running as follows:

I saw *Pindar* walking all alone, no one daring to accost him till *Cowley* joyn'd himself to him; but, growing weary of one who almost walk'd him out of Breath, he left him for *Horace* and *Anacreon*, with whom he seem'd infinitely delighted.¹⁴

But the odes were still the most widely known and discussed of Cowley's works. Even a partial list of the writers of Pindarics during the eighteenth century would show how much alive Cowley's influence was,¹⁵ and even a cursory examination of the evidence will show that the attacks on Pindarics were not leveled at Cowley at all, but at these imitators.¹⁶ Cowley was still the standard at the opening of the century,¹⁷ and remained so for some time.

Congreve's "Discourse on the Pindaric Ode," 1706 (contrary to the common idea today), definitely excepted Cowley from its arraignment of "these late Pindarics":

Having mentioned Mr. *Cowley*, it may very well be expected that Something should be said of him, at a Time when the Imitation of *Pindar* is the Theme of our Discourse. But there is that Deference due to the Memory, great Parts, and Learning of that Gentleman, that I think Nothing should be objected to the Latitude he has taken in his Pindaric Odes. The Beauty of his Verses, are [*sic*] an Atonement for the Irregularity of his Stanzas. . . .¹⁸

¹³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 201-2.

¹⁴ Steele, *Spect.*, No. 514; for the other passage, see Addison, No. 377.

¹⁵ For such a list, see J. Schipper, *Englische Metrik* (Bonn, 1888), II, 811 ff.

¹⁶ As Dryden had said in 1685 ("Pref. to *Sylvae*," *op. cit.*, I, 268): "What I have said is the general opinion of the best judges, and in a manner has been forced from me, by seeing a noble sort of poetry so happily restored by one man, and so grossly copied by almost all the rest."

¹⁷ Cf. the *Post-Angel* (June, 1701), I, 396. For this reference, as well as for several others, the present writer is indebted to Professor G. W. Sherburn of the University of Chicago.

¹⁸ *Works* (Birmingham, 1761), III, 435.

Felton asserted that Cowley was "of a Genius equal to his Author," but warned "weak Heads" against similar enterprizes.¹⁹ Addison's important attack upon "those monstrous Compositions which go among us under the Name of Pindaricks" had nothing at all to do with Cowley except—perhaps—by implication.²⁰ In the same year, 1711, Samuel Wesley imitated Cowley's "Second Olympic Ode of Pindar" thus:

COWLEY does to JOVE belong,
JOVE and COWLEY claim my song. . . .
Whatever COWLEY writes must please,
Sure, like the Gods, he speaks all Languages.
Whatever Theme by COWLEY'S Muse is drest,
Whatever he'll essay;
Or in the softer or the nobler way,
He still writes best.²¹

Giles Jacob, compiler of other men's opinions, wrote of the Pindaric in 1720:

Next to the Epick Poem, is the *Pindarick Ode*, which ought likewise to have much Nobleness of Thought, Elevation, and Transport: and it requires, to sustain all the Majesty of its Character, an exalted Wit. a daring Fancy, and an Expression noble and sparkling, yet pure and correct. . . . This Poem has been introduc'd into our Language by the happy Genius of Mr. Cowley, and is fit for great and noble subjects, such as are boundless as its own Numbers.²²

On June 3, 1732, *Applebee's Journal* could yet state that altho Shakespeare and Cowley had been justly censured in the last age, the odes of the latter still made him "the *Pindar* of the *English* tongue."²³ After 1732, however, little of importance was written until the second half of the century.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 168-9.

²⁰ *Spect.*, No. 160 (Sept. 3, 1711).

²¹ "On Mr. Cowley's Juvenile Poems," in Harper's 1711 ed. of Cowley, prefatory verses.

²² *Historical Account of . . . Our Most Considerable English Poets* (London, 1720), Introd. Essay, pp. xxii-iii.

²³ Quoted in *Gent. Mag.*, II, 786-7.

2. *The Mistress and Other Lyrics*

It was the *Mistress*, however, which received the brunt of the attack during this period. In fact, scarcely a single piece of unequivocal praise was awarded it. In the opening decades of the century, indeed, it was frequently quoted from or referred to without much comment,²⁴ but in 1711 the storm broke, in the form of Addison's sixty-second *Spectator* paper, on "Wit." Addison's definition of "Mixt Wit" as consisting "partly in the Resemblance of Ideas, and partly in the Resemblance of Words" and his citation of Cowley as abounding in such wit more than "any Author that ever wrote" are too well-known to need elaboration. The remainder of the passage, however, being more often neglected than observed, should be considered:

I cannot conclude this Head of *mixt Wit*, without owning that the admirable Poet out of whom I have taken the examples of it, had as much true Wit as any Author that ever writ; and indeed all other Talents of an extraordinary Genius.

Addison ended his discussion, however, by concluding that Dryden was both a better poet and a greater wit than Cowley.

The *Guardian* for March 30, 1713, struck the same note when it accused Donne and Cowley of a "redundancy of wit" in their songs,²⁵ but Prior, sometime before 1721, still took Cowley as one of the authorities for love-poetry:

My Cowley and Waller how vainly I quote,
While my negligent judge only hears with her eye
In a long flaxen wig, and embroider'd new coat,
Her spark saying nothing talks better than I.²⁶

Oldmixon, however, was probably the severest of all in his

²⁴ E. g., Pope, "Weeping," *Works*, IV, 431-2; John Dunton, *Life and Errors* (London, 1818), p. 231; Richard Friend, "Pref. Verses," *ibid.*, p. x; Swift, "Cadenus and Vanessa," *Poet. Works* (London, 1895), II, 200; Steele, *Spect.*, No. 41; Addison, *ibid.*, No. 311; etc.

²⁵ *Guard.*, No. 16.

²⁶ Prior, "A Case Stated," *Works* II, 272.

censure of the wit of the *Mistress*. He wrote, in part, echoing Dryden:

Cowley especially, with as much wit as ever Man had, shews as little Judgment, by which his Poetry is in our Days so sunk in the Opinion of good Judges, that there is no hope of its rising again. The following . . . is an Instance of how little he knew of Right-thinking, though he knew so much of Thought. . . .²⁷

Indeed, he hardly allowed Cowley the modicum of praise yielded him by Addison, and, in fact, accused the *Spectator* of a general servile lack of originality in the selection of beauties and ideas.²⁸ After such a diatribe, an indictment like Elijah Fenton's (1729) for having "industriously affected to entertain the fair sex with such philosophical allusions" as Waller later "industriously avoided" passes almost unnoticed.²⁹—And here again is a break in comments.

3. *The Davideis*

By the opening of the eighteenth century Cowley's epic was beginning to be esteemed chiefly by a certain class of people—the clergy and the piously minded. Nevertheless, among the rest it did not fare quite so harshly as did the *Mistress*, altho it was constantly becoming less and less known.

The *Post-Angel* for July, 1701, claimed that Samuel Wesley's "Heroick Poem on the Life of Christ, and this on the New Testament" deservedly ranked "him with Herbert, Cowley, Dryden, and the best Wits of the Age."³⁰ In 1705 the eccentric printer, John Dunton, Wesley's brother-in-law (who had quarreled with him about financial matters), thought the *Life of Christ* "intolerably dull," but maintained that "Cowley's 'Davideis,' Milton's 'Paradise Lost and Regained,' are noble and innocent enough."³¹

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, Dedic., pp. vii-viii.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 294 ff.

²⁹ "Observations on . . . Waller," *op. cit.*, p. lxi.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, II, 63.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

In 1704 John Dennis incidentally arraigned Cowley for his employment of religion in poetry, under two heads: the "strange Inequalities" which resulted in him and Spenser when the religion was not incorporated in the action; and the lack of "Inclinations and Affections" in the "celestial Persons" of him and Tasso. These "rules" should have been followed, according to Dennis, for a perfect epic.³²

In 1712, Thomas Ellwood, the Quaker friend of Milton, published another *Davideis*, which he was careful to free from the charge of plagiarism by stating that he had refrained from looking at Cowley's work until his own was completed.

His aim and mine differ widely: The method of each no less. He wrote for the learned; and those of the Upper Form: and his flights are answerable. . . . His would have needed (if he had not added it) a large Paraphrase upon it; to explain the many difficult passages in it. . . . I am not so wholly a stranger to the writings of the most celebrated poets, . . . as not to know, that their great embellishments of their poems consist mostly in their extravagant and almost boundless fancies; amazing and even dazzling flights; luxurious inventions; wild hyperboles; lofty language; with an introduction of angels, spirits, demons, and their respective deities, etc., which, as not suitable to my purpose, I industriously abstain from.³³

In 1718, however, Major Richardson Pack stated that "*Spenser and Cowley are Poets too of the Heroic Order*";³⁴ and Giles Jacob in 1719, that Cowley's "*Davideis* . . . cannot be too much admir'd."³⁵ Oldmixon, on the other hand, objected to Milton's and Cowley's mixing of "pagan" and "revealed" religions;³⁶ agreed with Dryden about Cowley's "points"; and sneered at Felton as follows:

Now that Mirrour of Criticism, Dr. *Felton* assures us, that *Cowley's Davideis*, is as excellent a Poem as the *Ilias* on [*sic*] *Aeneis*; and I must needs say the Poet and the Critick are very equal: The *Davideis* being ex-

³² *Grounds of Crit. in Poetry*, in Durham, pp. 204-5.

³³ "Epistle to the Reader"; quoted by McBryde, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³⁴ "Essay upon Study," *Misc. Works* (Dublin, 1726), p. 84.

³⁵ *Poetical Register* (London, 1719), p. 50.

³⁶ "Pref.," *op. cit.*, p. xxiv.

actly in comparison with the *Aeneis*, as the Doctor would be to *Varro* or *Quintilian*.³⁷

Finally, about 1742 Pope described his juvenile epic of *Alcander* as proposing to

. . . collect all the beauties of the great epic writers into one piece: there was Milton's style in one part, and Cowley's in another; here the style of Spenser imitated, and there of Statius; here of Homer and Virgil, and there Ovid and Claudian.³⁸

4. *The Plays*

The *Cutler* was revived on Oct. 5, 1702.³⁹ Dennis in the same year, speaking of the low state of English taste, mentioned that "several Plays have been indifferently received at first, which have succeeded very well afterwards," and cited Cowley.⁴⁰ Thomas Hearne, the antiquary, was probably referring to the 1663 "Preface" to the *Cutler* in his entry for May 18, 1706.⁴¹ On Aug. 1, 1711-2, the play was again given, at Drury Lane instead of Lincoln's Inn Fields; and was repeated on Nov. 1, 1723-4, at the latter.⁴² The *Naufragium Jocularis* was translated in 1705, probably by Charles Johnson, but was apparently unacted, altho the version was commended, as well as the original.⁴³ The 1712 preface to Waller's poems suggested that Waller had a hand in *The Rehearsal*, "with Mr. Clifford, Mr. Cowley, and some other wits."⁴⁴ Jacob, in 1719, gave a short account of all the plays, including "*Love's Riddle*; a Pastoral Comedy, 1633."⁴⁵ All this, however, seems to have played little part in determining Cowley's reputation.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 309; the allusion apparently does not quite fit anything in the *Dissertation* (ed. 1723).

³⁸ Spence's *Ancc.*, pp. 276-7.

³⁹ Genest, *op. cit.*, II, 262.

⁴⁰ "Large Account of the Taste in Poetry," in Durham, pp. 131-2.

⁴¹ *Remarks and Collections* (Oxford, 1835-1914), I, 246.

⁴² Genest, *op. cit.*, II, 500; III, 142.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, X, 65-6.

⁴⁴ Quoted by Hill, "Dryden," *Lives*, I, 368, n.

⁴⁵ *Poet. Reg.*, pp. 49-50.

5. *The Prose*

The only entirely unexpected development which took place in Cowley's reputation during this period was that which occurred to his prose, which includes the verse in his essays. It was not simply the essays which were known, however, but also the critical notes to the *Davideis*,⁴⁶ the *Proposition*,⁴⁷ and Cowley's own "Preface" to his 1656 edition.⁴⁸

A very general familiarity with the essays was shown, however, chiefly by means of simple quotation and allusion, at least eight of the eleven essays having been known in this way. "Of My Self" and "Of Greatness" took the lead.⁴⁹ The tone of the less frequent critical passages is easily illustrated. Steele, on July 11, 1711, wrote:

It is from this Reflexion that I always read Mr. Cowley with the greatest Pleasure: His Magnanimity is as much above that of other considerable Men, as his Understanding; . . . and it is no small Satisfaction to those of the same Turn of Desire, that he produces the Authority of the wisest Men of the best Age of the World, to strengthen his Opinion of the ordinary Pursuits of Mankind.⁵⁰

Other *Spectator* papers speak of "the excellent Mr. Cowley" (No. 251), of "that excellent epitaph" in "Of My Self" (No. 551), etc. Even Oldmixon, after another of his attacks on the wit of the *Mistress*, sorrowed because

. . . for a Man who wrote Prose as well as any one, and had as much Wit, to waste so much of it in Prosaick Poetry, is a Matter of Lamentation

⁴⁶ Cf. Dennis, *Grounds of Crit.*, in Durham, p. 176.

⁴⁷ Budgell, *Spect.*, No. 67 (May 17, 1711).

⁴⁸ Hearne, *op. cit.* (July 29, 1712), III, 415-6.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Pope, "The Garden," *Works*, IV, 430-1; Dunton, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 184, 239, 288, 441, 513, 524, 585-6, etc.; Felton, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Mary Wortley Montagu, *Works* (London, 1803), I, 157, 162, and *Letters* (Boston, 1884), p. 214; *Spect.*, Nos. 114, 123, 251, 379, 406, 551, 562, 610, 613; John Hughes, "Essay on Alleg. Poetry" (1715), in Durham, p. 87; Pope, *Works*, IX, 30-1; VI, 397; Welsted, "Perfection of Engl. Lang." (1724), in Durham, p. 381; Oldmixon, *op. cit.*, pp. 127, 343; Melmoth (May 5, 1743), *Letters of . . . Fitzosborne* (London, 1795), p. 336.

⁵⁰ *Spect.*, No. 114; the reference is to "Of Greatness."

to all who know his Merit, and respect his Memory, which all Lovers of Good Sense and good Learning must do.⁵¹

In conclusion, two often misinterpreted passages in Pope's poems about 1737 almost certainly refer to the essays and to the verses appended to them. At this time toward the end of his life Pope wrote thus:

Though daring Milton sits sublime,
In Spenser native muses play;
Nor yet shall Waller yield to time,
Nor pensive Cowley's moral lay.⁵²

This was without much doubt an echo of this slightly earlier passage:

Who now reads Cowley? if he pleases yet,
His moral pleases, not his pointed wit:
Forgot his epic, nay Pindaric art
But still I love the language of his heart. . . .⁵³

Nothing else in Cowley's works fits this description so well as his reflective essays and poems, and Bishop Hurd, Joseph Warton, and Mr. Courthope agree.

In this period, too, the editions of Cowley corroborate the testimony of the texts. Some decrease in the very great activity of the Restoration period would naturally be expected, both because Cowley had now been over thirty years dead and also because Addison and others had been vigorously attacking his wit. In spite of these two handicaps, however, it is rather surprising to see how sales must have continued. In 1701 the seventh edition of the second and third parts of the works was brought out. In 1702, Cowley's *Letters . . . Written . . . to Mr. Bennett* appeared in *Miscellanea Aulica*. In 1705 his Latin play was published as *Fortune in Her Wits*. "The Garden" appeared with

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁵² "Imit. of Hor. 9 Ode, 4 Bk.," *Works*, III, 419.

⁵³ "Imit. of Hor. 1 Epis., 2 Bk.," *ibid.*, p. 353.

Evelyn's *Kalendar* in 1706, 1729, etc. Tonson now came into the field and brought out a tenth edition of the works in 1707-8; an eleventh in 1710-1; and a twelfth in 1721. In 1716 "A Poem on the Civil War" re-appeared, this time in the sixth part of Dryden's *Miscellany Poems*.⁵⁴ "Love's Chronicle" appeared in 1730 [?], and *Cromwell* in the *Harleian Miscellany*, 1745.

The most important thing to note in interpreting the phenomena in this second period is that all of Cowley's writings did not stand or fall together. Those works which best conformed to the literary standards which the age had formulated from the basis of the Restoration rose in esteem; those which violated the principles of reason and good sense, especially the *Mistress*, were debased. The didactic works, being also shaped into a fitting form by their very nature, suited the didactic tendencies of Pope's contemporaries, who more than ever prided themselves on their "taste," and abhorred the "Gothic" and abnormal.^{54a}

On the other hand, tho people, beginning with Dryden in 1700, were continually discovering that Cowley was "sunk in his reputation," yet, when that discovery is made over and over again as a new and modern development, one begins to doubt. For instance, Gildon in 1718 wrote that "*Cowley* himself, so much ador'd for near Forty Years, loses every Day Ground with all those, who love *Nature*, and *Harmony*."⁵⁵ Harte, in the thirties, commented: "What a run had Cowley for about thirty years, the editions are innumerable.—There has been no edition now for this long time."⁵⁶ In one passage, again, Oldmixon talked about

⁵⁴ This circumstance seems to have led Grosart (*op. cit.*, I, cxxxiii) to conjecture that Dryden was the author of the "Publisher to the Reader" passage quoted above, p. 604.

^{54a} The present writer is now preparing an article which will show the attitude of the age of Pope toward the whole body of "Metaphysical Poets," including Cowley.

⁵⁵ "Complete Art of Poetry," in Durham, p. 38.

⁵⁶ See Spence, "Supplement" to *Ane.*, p. 339. Harte evidently was unacquainted with Tonson's three editions.

the vogue of the *Mistress* "about forty Years ago," and in another, of Cowley's fascination for him "thirty Years ago."⁵⁷ A sense of time and historical perspective seems absent in all of these cases, so that one wonders whether Cowley was really so dead as many claimed. Indeed, practically everyone seemed to know him. Aaron Hill, therefore, while comparing Milton and Cowley, and altho prejudiced against the former because of political beliefs, probably came pretty close to the solution when he wrote, on June 1, 1730, that he would not fear to throw open his breast to one

who, in contempt of the fashion we are fallen into, of decrying the works of the second, could have the courage to declare himself charmed, by both the *muse* and the *man*.⁵⁸

III. SCHOLARLY CRITICISM OF COWLEY (1746-1800)

During the period following his death the popularity of Abraham Cowley rested in the hands of a wide general public, composed of all classes of readers. During the first half of the eighteenth century his works had begun to pass into the possession of a somewhat more restricted class, composed chiefly of literary men, clergy, and others of education. In the last period the general trend was toward the critics and scholars, such as Dr. Johnson, Bishop Hurd, Joseph Warton, Lord Kames, and Professor Beattie, altho a fairly wide acquaintance with his writings was also shown by the populace.

The gap between the two latter periods was filled to a slight extent by such passing remarks as Robert Dodsley's, about 1748, when he compared "Milton's true sublime

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 36-7, 275; see also passage quoted on p. 612 of the present article.

⁵⁸ "To Mr. Richardson," *Rich. Corres.* (London, 1804), I, 2-3. Samuel Richardson himself claimed Cowley as his favorite poet (see Erich Poetschke, *Samuel Richardsons Belesenheit*, Kiel, 1908).

with Cowley's wit,"¹ and by such classical documents as the "Poetical Scale":²

This scale is supposed to consist of 20 degrees for each column, of which 19 may be attained in any one qualification, but the 20th was never yet attain'd to.	Genius	Judge- ment	Learn- ing	Versifi- cations
Chaucer.....	16	12	10	14
Spencer.....	18	12	14	18
Drayton.....	10	11	16	13
Shakespear.....	19	14	14	19
Johnson.....	16	18	17	8
Cowley.....	17	17	15	17
Waller.....	12	12	10	16
Milton.....	18	16	17	18
Dryden.....	18	16	17	18
Pope.....	18	18	15	19

Cowley's position here in relation to other men, as well as the balance in his qualities, is worth remarking.

Really important general criticism, however, was such as was inaugurated by Professor Hugh Blair, of the University of Edinburgh, in his lectures from 1759 to 1762. Blair's attribution of Cowley's fate to the difference in taste in different ages was followed by many people; and his contempt for Cowley's "laboured and unnatural conceits" and for his lack of "simplicity" met with considerable approval.³ William Shenstone, however, about 1764-9, could still

¹ "Art of Preaching," in R. Anderson, *Brit. Poets* (London, 1795), XI, 98.

² Attributed to Goldsmith by Gibbs in the Bohn ed. of Goldsmith, IV, 417 ff.; it appeared in the *Lit. Mag.*, Jan., 1758, p. 6.

³ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London, 1812), I, 30; II, 31. Other similar opinions were expressed by Hume, 1754-61, *Hist. of Engl.* (London, 1822), VII, 339; Cowper, 1784, "Task," *Works* (London and N. Y., 1889), p. 245; H. Walpole, June 26, 1785, *Letters* (Oxford, 1904 ff.), XIII, 282.

mention "the wit of Cowley" as taking its place with the best qualities of the greatest writers.⁴

James Beattie, Scotch poet and philosopher, characterized Cowley thus, in an essay composed in 1769:

I know not whether any nation ever produced a more singular genius than Cowley. He abounds in tender thoughts, beautiful lines, and emphatical expressions, his wit is inexhaustible, and his learning extensive; but his taste is generally barbarous, and seems to have been formed upon such models as Donne, Martial, and the worst parts of Ovid: nor is it possible to read his longer poems with pleasure, while we retain any relish for the simplicity of antient composition. If this author's ideas had been fewer, his conceits would have been less frequent; so that in one respect learning may be said to have hurt his genius. . . .⁵

He also accused Cowley of "harshness."⁶ Thomas Gray, Apr. 15, 1770, also emphasized Cowley's conceits in his own plans for a history of English poetry such as Thomas Warton was writing, when he distinguished a "third Italian school . . . carried to its height by Cowley."⁷

Since Thomas Warton's history never reached a treatment of Cowley, Joseph Warton is more important to this study than is his brother. In the first volume of the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, 1756, he placed Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, with perhaps Otway and Lee, among "sublime and pathetic poets."

In the second class should be placed, such as possessed the true poetical genius, in a more moderate degree, but had noble talents for moral and ethical poetry. At the head of these are DRYDEN, DONNE, DENHAM, COWLEY, CONGELVE.⁸

This classification was attacked on one or two scores, and Warton later conformed by reducing Donne to the third class; but even the attacking *Monthly Review* held that

⁴ Essay III, *Essays on Men and Manners* (London, 1787; in Harrison's *Brit. Classics*), VIII, 6.

⁵ *Essays on Poetry and Music, etc.* (Edinburgh, 1779), pp. 494-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ Gray, Letter to T. Warton, in the Aldine *Gray* (London, 1885), pp. cx-xii.

⁸ "Ded.," *op. cit.* (London, 1756), p. xi.

"There can be no exception to the rank assigned that excellent genius [Cowley], whose works are a valuable mine of literary and poetic jewels."⁹ Nevertheless, in his second volume, 1782, Warton explained his position in this way, in discussing Cowley's witticisms:

It is painful to censure a writer of so amiable a mind, such integrity of manners, and such a sweetness of temper. His fancy was brilliant, strong, and sprightly; but his taste false and unclassical, even though he had much learning.¹⁰

And in his commentary on Pope's *Works*, 1797, he ranked

. . . our most eminent poets, with respect to their learning, in the following order:—Milton, Spenser, Cowley, Butler, Donne, Jonson, Akenside, Gray, Dryden, Addison.¹¹

He also praised Dr. Johnson's "admirable observations in the Life of Cowley" on "Metaphysical Poetry."¹²

But Dr. Johnson dominated Cowley criticism much as he dominated a large portion of the literary world; and his praise was often hard to separate from his blame. Several passages in the early periodical essays are not of much value, but Boswell recorded that in 1773 Johnson asserted that there "is more sense in a line of Cowley than in a page (or a sentence, or ten lines,—I am not quite certain of the very phrase) of Pope," and represented Wilkes as saying in 1781, "Upon the continent they all quote the vulgate Bible. Shakespeare is chiefly quoted here; and we also quote Pope, Prior, Butler, Waller, and sometimes Cowley."¹³ Early in his famous life of Cowley (1778-9), however, Johnson indicated the only sane attitude to take toward Cowley:

COWLEY, like other poets who have written with narrow views and instead of tracing intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind

⁹ Review of Warton's *Essay*, *Month. Rev.*, XIV, 535.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* (London, 1782), II, 45 ff.

¹¹ "Preface," ed. of Pope (London, 1822), p. 15.

¹² *Op. cit.* (London, 1797), VI, 235, n.

¹³ Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (ed. Hill, Oxford, 1887), V, 345; IV, 102.

of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised and too much neglected at another.¹⁴

Johnson also denominated Cowley the best of his rather queerly assorted "metaphysical" group,¹⁵ and most critics have agreed with him here, altho lately the trend has been in favor of Donne.^{16a} That Johnson's real criticism, however, was an excellent example of the discriminative type is proved by the following passages:

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetick, and rarely sublime, but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound. . . . He read much and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own; he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. . . .

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. . . .

. . . . Upon every subject he thought for himself. . . .

His diction was in his own time considered as negligent. . . .

His versification seems to have had very little of his care. . . .

It may be affirmed without any encomiastick fervour that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less; that he was equally qualified for spritely sallies and for lofty flights; that he was among those who freed translation from servility . . . ; and that if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, I, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 35.

^{16a} For a discussion of this topic, especially of Donne's metrical technic, see the present writer's article, 'The Reputation of John Donne as Metrist,' *Sewanee Review*, XXX (1922, No. 4), 1-12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-65, *passim*. Others of the more important critical biographies of Cowley during this period are the following: a complete and favorable account in the *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1750), with even more favorable additions by Dr. Kippis in the second edition (1789), IV, 366-82 (the *Encyc. Brit.* based its early account almost entirely on this one); a still more laudatory one in "Mr. Cibber's" widely known *Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1753), II, 42-62; a discriminative, but generally favorable, one in James Granger's popular *Biographical History*

Yet the tendency from the publication of the *Lives* onwards, even more than before it, has been to overlook Cowley's good points and to fasten only upon his bad ones. A critic in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for Jan., 1795, may stand for his class: "This writer is ranked among the metaphysical poets; his wit is factitious, his genius artificial, if I may so express myself." He then practically refused to admit Cowley "to be really a poet."¹⁷

1. *Latin Poetry, Anacreontics, Pindarics*

It was only in the latter half of the eighteenth century that Cowley's own Pindarics joined a great deal of his epic and other lyric verse as a subject for directly unfavorable criticism; at the same time, however, his Latin poetry and Anacreontics retained their former status. Johnson held that Cowley's Latin was superior to Milton's; that "Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions"; but that the Latin of Thomas May improved on both.¹⁸ The *Plantarum* was also known.¹⁹ Several men, moreover, complimented the Anacreontics. Hume, for instance, after a violent attack on Cowley's various faults, added:

Great ingenuity, however, and vigour of thought, sometimes break out amidst these unnatural conceptions: a few anacreontics surprise us by their ease and gaiety. . . .²⁰

Bishop Hurd, in a critical note to the Anacreontics in his selected edition, 1772, insisted that

The *Anacreontics* shew, that the author wanted neither ease of expres-

of *England* (London, 1824—1st ed., 1769), III, 123-4, 244-5; and another just and discriminating one in Henry Headley's *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry* (London, 1810—1st ed., 1787), I, iii-vi.

¹⁷ *Gent. Mag.*, LXV, 17.

¹⁸ "Cowley," *op. cit.*, pp. 12-3; and "Milton," p. 87.

¹⁹ See the *Adventurer*, No. 39 (Mar. 20, 1753); and *Gent. Mag.* (Oct., 1787), LVII, 847.

²⁰ *Hist. of Engl.*, VII, 339.

sion nor the grace of numbers, when he followed the bent of his own taste and genius.²¹

Johnson tempered his praise thus:

. . . . Of those songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, . . . he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their spriteliness, but lost their simplicity. . . .

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. . . .

The *Anacreontiques* therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and festive.²²

Blair compared them with the Pindarics to the great disadvantage of the latter:

As to professed Pindaric Odes, they are, with a few exceptions, so incoherent, as seldom to be intelligible. Cowley, at all times harsh, is doubly so in his Pindaric Compositions. In his Anacreontic Odes, he is much happier. They are smooth and elegant; and, indeed, the most agreeable, and the most perfect, in their kind, of all Mr. Cowley's Poems.²³

A new translation of Pindar in 1749, by Gilbert West, was probably largely responsible for renewing the discussion of Cowley's odes. In his own preface, West called attention to the absence, in Pindar, of "the far-fetched thoughts, the witty extravagances, and puerile *concelli* of Mr. Cowley and the rest of his imitators," and pointed out the difference in form between the two, but nevertheless qualified his criticism by adding:

I say not this to detract from Mr. Cowley, whose genius, perhaps, was not inferior to that of *Pindar* himself, or either of those two other great poets, *Horace* and *Virgil*, whose names have been bestowed upon him, but chiefly to apologize for my having ventured to translate the same odes; and to prepare the reader for the wide difference between many parts of his translations and mine.²⁴

²¹ *Select Works of Mr. A. Cowley* (London, 1777), I, 138.

²² "Cowley," *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

²³ *Op. cit.*, III, 134.

²⁴ See the *Month. Rev.* (May, 1749), I, 39-40; also Chalmers, XIII, 144.

It is evident that Cowley's popularity still bore considerable weight; indeed, some people were still surprized to discover that Pindar's own odes were built on a regular scheme.²⁵

The use to which much of Cowley's work was being put at this time may be illustrated by a passage from Blair's lecture on "Comparison, Antithesis, Interrogation, Exclamation, and Other Figures of Speech":

Nothing is more opposite to the design of this Figure [Comparison], than to hunt after a great number of coincidences in minute points, merely to shew how far the poet's wit can stretch the resemblance. This is Mr. Cowley's common fault; whose Comparisons generally run out so far, as to become rather a studied exercise of wit, than an illustration of the principal object. We need only open his works, his odes especially, to find instances every where.²⁶

A mere citation to prove a point of rhetoric is far from flattering.

Criticism of the Pindarics at its extremest was represented by the Rev. Vicesimus Knox's "On the Merits of Cowley as a Poet," in his *Essays, Moral and Literary* (1778-9). Knox attributed Cowley's high position during the Restoration simply to Sprat's praises, but even he found it impossible to leave the subject without a word of praise for Cowley's Latin and his Anacreontics:

That he could ever be esteemed as a Pindaric poet, is a curious literary phaenomenon. He totally mistook his own genius when he thought of imitating Pindar. He totally mistook the genius of Pindar, when he thought his own incoherent sentiments and numbers bore the least resemblance to the wild, yet regular sublimity of the Theban. . . . Wit of any kind would be improperly displayed in such composition; but to increase the absurdity, the wit of Cowley is often false. . . .

That he had a taste for Latin poetry, and wrote in it with elegance, the well-known Epitaph on himself, upon his retirement, and an admirable imitation of Horace, are full proofs. . . . But still he had great merit; and I must confess I have read some of his Latin verses with more pleasure than any of his English afforded.²⁷

²⁵ "Mr. Jones, of Welwyn," in Spence, "Sup.," to *Anecc.*, p. 349.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, I, 405.

²⁷ *Op. cit.* (London, 1787), III, 435-8; see also p. 480 for appreciative passage on Anacreontics.

Beattie, too, asseverated that the Pindarics were "destitute of harmony, simplicity, and every other classical grace," but prefaced this remark by stating that "his imitations of Anacreon are almost the only parts of him that are now remembered or read."²⁸ Richard Hurd explained Cowley's harshness in a note to "Brutus":

It has been generally supposed, that Mr. Cowley had no ear for harmony, and even no taste of elegant expression. And one should be apt to think so, from his untuned verse and rugged style: but the case was only this: Donne and Jonson were the favourite poets of the time, and therefore the models, upon which our poet was ambitious to form himself. But unfortunately these poets *affected* harsh numbers and uncooth [*sic*] expression, and what they affected, easily came to be looked upon as *beauties*.²⁹

Johnson waxed somewhat ironic at Cowley's expense:

The *Pindarique Odes* have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely, though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new and often striking, but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabric, august in the plan, but mean in the material. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no one but Cowley could have written them.³⁰

Nevertheless, Johnson dropped a good word for the regular odes, "Of Wit," and "On the Death of Mr. Crashaw,"³¹ and even in 1791 Boswell approved of a thought "elegantly expressed" in the irregular "Ode upon His Majesty's Restoration and Return."³² After all, indeed, the 1797 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* took the most justifiable position—one of compromise—when it disagreed with Congreve's attack on Pindarics, maintained that there were many Pindarics (or "rather . . . irregular odes") deserving commendation,

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 495.

²⁹ Cowley, I, 168, n.

³⁰ "Cowley," *op. cit.*, p. 48; see also pp. 44, 47.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 36, 39.

³² Boswell, *Johnson*, V, 333, n.

and argued that undoubtedly many of their writers deviated from Pindar's method thru choice rather than ignorance; nevertheless, it failed to mention Cowley by name.³³

2. *The Mistress and Other Lyrics*

The lyrics perhaps represent best of all the academic and instructive use to which much of Cowley's poetry was put during this period. Blair, in his lecture on "Metaphor," likened many of Cowley's figures to an "ænigma," and quoted from "The Stubborn Heart" and "To Sleep" to show "how forced and obscure" they were.³⁴ Lord Kames (Henry Home), in his *Elements of Criticism*, 1762, cited Cowley in discussing fantastic causes which have no relation to the effect produced, and again for "verbal antithesis."³⁵ A good example of his didactic method is the following:

Thirdly, these figures, a metaphor especially, ought not to be crowded with many minute circumstances; for in that case it is scarcely possible to avoid obscurity. A metaphor above all ought to be short: it is difficult, for any time, to support a lively image of a thing being what we know it is not; and for that reason, a metaphor drawn out to any length, instead of illustrating or enlivening the principal subject, becomes disagreeable by overstraining the mind. Here Cowley is extremely licentious: take the following instance. . . .³⁶

In similar illustrative passages, Kames quoted from no less than eight of Cowley's lyrics of this type.³⁷

Nevertheless, some of these poems were still enjoyed. Hurd, for instance, in 1764 called "The Complaint" "one of the prettiest of Cowley's smaller Poems," because of its "highly poetical" plan, its "natural and beautiful" expression, and its "air of *melancholy*," in spite of its occasional

³³ See under "Poetry," *Ency. Brit.* (1797), XV, 224.—Even Johnson, however, believed that Congreve "first taught the English writers that Pindar's odes were regular" ("Congreve," *Lives*, II, 234).

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, I, 352.

³⁵ *Op. cit.* (N. Y., 1858), pp. 187, 190.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 246, 387-8, etc.

unpleasing "numbers."³⁸ Moreover, several passages similar to the following are to be found in the same author's running commentary on his selected works of Cowley in 1772:

This agreeable Ballad ["The Chronicle"] has had justice done to it. Nothing is more famous, even in our days, than Cowley's *mistresses*.³⁹

Johnson's analysis resulted thus: as far back as Oct. 6, 1759, after commending "The Wayting-Maid," he had written:

Cowley seems to have possessed the power of writing easily beyond any other of our poets; yet his pursuit of remote thoughts led him often into harshness of expression.⁴⁰

In the "Life" he also selected, as follows:

His Miscellanies contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best among many good is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism.

His favorites, however, were "The Motto" and "The Chronicle." Nevertheless, in "On the Death of Hervey"

. . . there is much praise, but little passion . . . when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would *crackle* in the fire . . . But the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections, as to exercise the understanding.

As for many of the poems in the *Mistress*,

They are neither courtly nor pathetick, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far-sought and too hyperbolical, either to express love or to excite it: every stanza is crowded [*sic*] with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts. . . . The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymers who had only heard of

³⁸ *Moral and Political Dialogues; with Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London, 1771), I, 131, n.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, I, 156, n.

⁴⁰ *Idler*, No. 77.

another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for his talk, we sometimes esteem as learned and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.⁴¹

This was the passage which so tickled Boswell's Scotch sense of humor that he wrote, in 1791:

Why may not a poet suppose himself to have the gout, as well as suppose himself to be in love, of which we have innumerable instances, and which has been admirably ridiculed by Johnson in his *Life of Cowley*?⁴²

3. *The Davideis*

By this time the *Davideis* was practically dead, and even the few who knew it condemned it, altho even they did not think it worth discussing at much length. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) of George Campbell, another schoolmaster, under "Hobbes's account of laughter *examin'd*," referred to Cowley's "description of envy exaggerated to absurdity," in the first book of the epic,⁴³ and later on, after another allusion, added: "What an insatiable appetite has this bastard-philosophy for absurdity and contradiction!"⁴⁴ Beattie, in the same year, mentioned the *Davideis* in three or four remarks similar to those he had made in other connections; for instance:

Nothing has a worse effect, than descriptions too long, too frequent, or too minute; witness the *Davideis* of Cowley. . . . From Virgil's *Pulcherrima Dido*, and the simile of Diana amidst her nymphs, our fancy may form for itself a picture of feminine loveliness and dignity more perfect than ever Cowley or Ovid could exhibit in their most elaborate descriptions.

Or this, bearing on incongruous ideas depending on the same verb:

In all wit of this sort when laughter is intended, it will perhaps be necessary to blend greatness with littleness, or to form some other glaring conceit.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-42, *passim*.

⁴² Boswell, *Johnson*, I, 179.

⁴³ *Op. cit.* (Edinburgh, 1816), I, 80.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 95.

Ovid and Cowley are fond of these conceits, but seldom raise a smile by them, and surely did not intend any. . . .⁴⁵

Johnson, altho making some errors in his figures, nevertheless summarized the case justly when he wrote:

. . . . That we have not the whole *Davidis* is, however, not much to be regretted, for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many instances of so great a work produced by an author generally read and generally praised that has crept through a century with so little regard. Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the *Davidis* no mention is made; it never appears in books nor emerges in conversation. By the *Spectator* it has once been quoted, by Rymer it has once been praised, and by Dryden, in *Mac Flecknoe*, it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this silence and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work. . . .

To the subject, thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetic embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits, and conceits are all that the *Davidis* supplies.⁴⁶

The following passage, indeed, written in 1782, apparently manifests the nearest approach to a sympathetic reference which the epic received during the latter part of the century:

Ingenuous COWLEY, the fond dupe of wit,
Seems like a vapour o'er the field to flit;
In David's praise he strikes some Epic notes,
But soon down Lethe's stream their dying murmur floats.⁴⁷

No one in that would accuse Hayley of sycophancy.

4. *The Plays*

If Cowley's epic was now moribund, his plays were dead. Johnson and Hurd, with two or three others, seem to have been the only ones to know them; still, the first commended the *Cutler*:

For the rejection of this play it is difficult now to find the reason; it

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 92, 329-30, n.; see also pp. 66, n.; 253.

⁴⁶ "Cowley," *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51.

⁴⁷ William Hayley, *An Essay on Epic Poetry* (London, 1782), p. 64.

certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. . . . It appears, however, from the *Theatrical Register* of Downes the prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the Royalists.⁴⁸

Johnson also cited Cowley as one who probably helped "in the original draft of *The Rehearsal*."⁴⁹ Hurd, too, said that the *Cutler* had "considerable merit," and would have liked to print it.⁵⁰

5. *The Prose*

The increasing appreciation of his prose, for which Cowley is undoubtedly most widely read today, was revealed in this period by an important change in the type of reference to it. An allusion or a quotation in most cases was no longer sufficient (altho there were still many references of this sort), but more and more frequently the writer was not content until he had expressed his enjoyment frankly, in so many words. The best known essays were still "Of My Self" and "Of Greatness," but it is worth noticing that much less than before was acquaintance confined to the essays alone. Not a single unfavorable reference, moreover, is discoverable, with the exception of possibly one or two which apply to ideas and opinions rather than to style.⁵¹

The growing historical point of view in literary matters is well illustrated in the treatment of the prose. In July, 1756, the *Monthly Review*, in describing the seventeenth century, disagreed with Joseph Warton's suggestion that "Our stile in prose was but beginning to be polished," by replying that "If Cowley had not wrote Essays, Dryden Prefaces, . . . we should, perhaps, have agreed with our Author."⁵² Moreover, on Nov. 24, 1759, Goldsmith, in describing "The Augustan Age of England," when the

⁴⁸ "Cowley," *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ "Waller," *ibid.*, p. 282.

⁵⁰ Cowley, I, 91, n.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Johnson, *Rambler*, No. 6 (Apr. 7, 1750).

⁵² Review of Warton's *Essay*, *op. cit.*, XV, 57.

English "language and literature arrived at its highest perfection," made this prediction: "The time seems to be at hand, when justice will be done to Mr. Cowley's prose, as well as poetical writings . . ."⁵³ Hurd was always the most sympathetic of critics and the most enthusiastic about the prose. In 1764 he had written: "Lords and wits may decide of the qualities of Mr. COWLEY'S *head*, as they please; but, so long as these *Essays* remain, they will oblige all honest men *to love the language of his heart*";⁵⁴ and in 1772 defended his author still more valiantly and sympathetically:

In these discourses (as in every thing, indeed, which Mr. Cowley wrote in prose) we have a great deal of good sense, embellished by a lively, but very natural expression. The sentiments flow from the heart, and generally, in a vein of pure and proper English.—What a force must he have put on himself, when he complied with the false taste of his age, in his poetical, which he too modestly thought, his best works?⁵⁵

Joseph Warton, after naming most of the prose compositions, said that Cowley "appears to be one of the best prose writers of his time."⁵⁶ Vicesimus Knox, after demolishing Cowley's verse, came to his prose and asserted that here Cowley was an elegant, a pleasing, a judicious writer, and that it was much to be lamented that he did not devote a greater part of his time to a kind of writing which appeared natural to him, and in which he excelled.⁵⁷ Johnson was of the same opinion:

After so much criticism on his Poems, the Essays which accompany them must not be forgotten. . . . No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet

⁵³ *Bee*, No. VIII.

⁵⁴ "On Retirement," *Dialogues*, I, 126, n. As early as 1751, Hurd had made the same point in his "Marks of Imitation," appended to his *Horace* (London, 1766, III, 180-1).

⁵⁵ *Cowley*, II, 83, n.; see also II, 196, n., where he called Cowley the better of "our two great models of essay-writing"—Cowley and Montaigne.

⁵⁶ *Essay on Pope*, II, 42.

⁵⁷ *Essays*, III, 438-40.

obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought, or hard-laboured; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.⁵⁸

Johnson also called attention to Cowley's unnoticed critical ability:

. . . Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed: the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the *Davidis* supply were at that time accessions to English literature, and shew such skill as raises our wish for more examples.⁵⁹

Cowley's two other prose works, the *Proposition* and *Cromwell*, were both favorably known. Hurd compared the former to Milton's *Tractate on Education*, and found that Cowley's "was better digested and is the less fanciful."⁶⁰ Knox mentioned Cowley and Milton as taking the lead in such projects.⁶¹ As for the latter, it was used by Hume in his *History*,⁶² and finally eulogized by Hurd as

. . . the best of our author's prose-works. The subject, which he had much at heart, raised his genius. There is something very noble, and almost poetical, in the plan of this Vision; and a warm vein of eloquence runs quite through it.⁶³

After all, then, was not Samuel Richardson deceiving himself on June 4, 1750, when he wondered why Cowley was so absolutely neglected?

Cowley has great merit with me; and the greater, as he is out of fashion in this age of taste. And yet I wonder he is so absolutely neglected, as he wants not point and turn, and wit, and fancy, and an imagination very brilliant. . . .⁶⁴

How far right was Richardson when he went on to stigmatize

⁵⁸ "Cowley," *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38; see also p. 54, and under "Dryden," pp. 410-1. In *Rambler*, No. 6, Johnson also showed his acquaintance with the 1656 preface.

⁶⁰ *Cowley*, I, 219.

⁶¹ *Liberal Education* (London, 1781), p. 165, n.

⁶² *Op. cit.*, VII, 287.

⁶³ *Cowley*, II, 1.

⁶⁴ *Corres.*, II, 229.

...age as one of "dictionary-learning and index-learning," and when he did not disdain to praise even the *Mistress in Pamela* and *Clarissa*?⁶⁵ At any rate, if he was not right about Cowley's popularity in 1750, it is undeniable that a new viewpoint soon entered in, coincident with the "Romantic Revival"^{65a}—a viewpoint which was summarized by the 1797 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in its article on Cowley, which concluded thus:

So many of Cowley's productions being now esteemed scarcely worthy of a perusal, while others of them are distinguished by their beauty, Dr. Aurd [*sic*] (the present bishop of Worcester) thought proper to make a selection of them, which he published in 1772. . . .

The tendency of the last period, then, was toward editing and selecting. In 1755 some of Cowley's specimens were appended to *Martialis Epigrammata Selecta*. Hurd's selected edition of the works, in 1772, however, was probably the most important of all, for a second edition came out in the same year, a third in 1777, and a fourth by 1783,⁶⁶ all occasioning some comment.⁶⁷ In 1773, "select poems" appeared in volume VII of the *British Poets*. The poetical works appeared in J. Bell's *Poets of Great Britain*, 1777,

⁶⁵ See Poetzsche, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

^{65a} The present writer is now at work on an article which will attempt to point out the parts played by Cowley and the other "Metaphysical Poets" in the Romantic Revival during the latter eighteenth century.

⁶⁶ See John Nichols, *Illustrations of the . . . 18th Cent.* (London, 1817-58), V, 674.

⁶⁷ Johnson first disapproved of the idea of selecting and thus mutilating, but later retracted (Boswell, III, 29, 227). The *Morning Chronicle* for Jan. 30, 1776, wrote: "The learned Editor has cleared the Works of Cowley from many false thoughts, from ill-placed wit, and great puerilities; yet he certainly deprived us of many fine flights of true poetry and of some distinguishing marks which distinguish Cowley from every other poet." (Quoted in Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, London, 1812-5, VI, 484, n.) The *Monthly Review* had already (Jan., 1773; XLVIII, 13-8) made the same complaint. When the *Gent. Mag.*, however, printed (Mar., 1776; XLVI, 115) the note from the *Chronicle*, another correspondent replied in defense of Hurd, claiming the necessity of selection (June, 1776; XLVI, 380).

and again in 1782. The poems and the essays were included in Johnson's *Works of the English Poets*, 1779, and the essays reprinted there in 1790. John Nichols printed three of Cowley's juvenile poems in 1781, and characterized their author.⁶⁸ Joseph Ritson also made selections in 1783 and 1793.⁶⁹ The poetical works also appeared in R. Anderson's *Poets of Great Britain*, 1792. Even the *History of Plants* was revived as late as 1795.

With these facts in mind, a true estimate of Wordsworth's analysis in 1815 may be obtained:

About the time when the Pindaric odes of Cowley and his imitators, and the productions of that class of curious thinkers whom Dr. Johnson has strangely styled metaphysical Poets, were beginning to lose something of that extravagant admiration which they had excited, the 'Paradise Lost' made its appearance. [Query: was this the situation in 1667?] . . . Dr. Johnson has fallen into a gross mistake when he attempts to prove, by the sale of the work, that Milton's Countrymen were 'just to it' upon its first appearance. . . . How careless must a writer be who can make this assertion in the face of so many existing title pages to belie it! Turning to my own shelves, I find the folio of Cowley, seventh edition, 1681. . . . I well remember that, twenty-five years ago, the booksellers' stalls in London swarmed with the folios of Cowley. This is not said in disparagement of that able writer and amiable man; but merely to show that, if Milton's work were not more read, it was not because readers did not exist at the time.⁷⁰

Not only did Cowley have readers enough for a seventh edition by 1681, as Wordsworth indicated, but he still had a presentable number "twenty-five years" before 1815 also, as Wordsworth failed to insist, and this number did not compare unfavorably with that of Milton and Dryden.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *A Select Collection of Poems* . . . (London, 1780-2), VII, 70-5.

⁶⁹ *A Select Collection of English Songs*. . . (London, 1813), I, 151; II, 26; 181. Also *The English Anthology* (London, 1793-4), I, 74-8.

⁷⁰ "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface, 1815," *Poet. Works* (Cambr. ed., N. Y., 1904), p. 810.

⁷¹ The writer is indebted for the following material, as well as for valuable critical help, to his friend and colleague, Professor R. S. Crane, of Northwestern University.

An examination of 206 book sale catalogs, dating from 1754 to 1800, reveals the fact that in these private libraries, chosen at random, the following editions of Cowley were present:

<i>Period I</i>	
<i>Latin</i>	<i>Copies</i>
1668.....	5
1678.....	1

<i>Mistress</i>	
1647.....	1
?1669.....	1

<i>Works</i>	
1656.....	2
1668.....	14
1669.....	3
1672.....	1
{ 1674.....	5
{ (1681.....	
{ re-issue).....	2
1678.....	4
{ 1680-1.....	5
{ (1688-9.....	
{ re-issue).....	9
1681.....	4
{ 1684.....	8
{ (1693.....	
{ re-issue).....	1
?1699.....	1
1700.....	7

<i>Period II</i>	
<i>Works</i>	<i>Copies</i>
1707-8.....	20
1710-1.....	21
1721.....	17

<i>Period III</i>	
<i>Works</i>	<i>Copies</i>
{ ?1765.....	1
{ 1772.....	8
1779.....	2
Edition unknown.....	2
Total copies.....	145

That the owners of these 145 copies of Cowley in 206 libraries existing in the third period were sufficiently diverse to represent a general public may be seen from the following names: Rev. Dr. Rooke; Earl of Macclesfield; J. Wilkes; Sir James Colbrooke; Hayter, Bishop of London; Another Gentleman; H. Fielding; A General Officer; Ed. Jacob, Esq.; A Divine of the Ch. of Eng.; Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham; A Gentleman Lately Deceased; Dr. Edward Archer; John Landon, Esq., F.R.S.; Mr. Leathers, Apothecary; Gentleman in Army Going Abroad; etc., etc.

For the purpose of comparing Cowley's popularity with those whose reputation has never been questioned, the following figures are given: in the same 206 libraries there were 236 copies of the various works of Dryden, and 341 of those of Milton.

The interpretation of these phenomena during the third period seems to be somewhat as follows. Almost nobody praised Cowley unequivocally; in fact, most people—perhaps in accordance with a "fashion"—decried him; but still a very great number read him.^{71a} Criticism centered upon two chief things: his "wit" and his "harshness," neither of which were in accordance with the "taste" of the age. Plenty of writers on the then youthful science of aesthetics summed up their general principles of criticism without any reference at all to Cowley, and yet it is easy to see how he would fall under their ban. Joseph Addison epitomized many more formal treatises when he wrote, on June 28, 1753:

In every species of writing, whether we consider style or sentiment, simplicity is a beauty. . . . A redundancy of metaphors, a heap of sounding and florid epithets, remote allusions, sudden flashes of wit, lively and epigrammatic turns, dazzle the imaginations, and captivate the minds of vulgar readers, who are apt to think the simple manner unanimated and dull, for want of being acquainted with the models of the great antique. . . .

^{71a} A similar development took place in the case of another popular seventeenth century poet; see the present writer's article, 'The Literary Legend of Francis Quarles,' *Mod. Phil.*, XX (1923), 225-240.

Among ourselves, no writer has, perhaps, made so happy and judicious a mixture of plain and figurative turns as Addison, who was the first that banished from the English, as Boileau from the French, every species of bad eloquence and false wit, and opened the gates of the Temple of Taste to his fellow citizens.⁷²

Very few of Cowley's writings which did not qualify in these requirements of the refined taste survived in the eighteenth century, altho ever since then most of his works have been undergoing a slow rehabilitation.

Before stating the final conclusions of this study, it may be valuable to adduce in condensed form some further evidence to show that the results so far arrived at have been based on sufficiently broad foundations. The accompanying tables, which list and classify all the material so far collected on Cowley, are necessarily approximate only, but a little study will show them none the less valuable on that account.

	Favor- able	Unfavor- able	Discrim- inative	Non- critical	Totals
I. 1660-1700 ⁷³					
1. General.....	45	0	6	20	71
2. Latin poetry....	3	0	1	5	9
Anacreontics....	1	0	0	0	1
Pindarics.....	23	2	4	11	40
Regular odes....	1	0	0	3	4
3. <i>Mistress</i> , etc....	12	2	2	14	30
4. <i>Duvidais</i>	13	2	3	7	25
5. Plays.....	4	1	0	4	9
6. Prose.....	6	0	0	5	11
Totals.....	108	7	16	69	200

⁷² *World*, No. 26.

⁷³ This table is based on remarks from the following sources: Joseph Addison, *Athenian Mercury*, John Aubrey, Capt. John Ayloffe, Philip Ayres, Mrs. Jane Barker, Richard Baxter, Sir Thomas Pope Blount, Roger Boyle, Tom Brown, Samuel Butler, Knightly Chetwood, Lord Clarendon, Daniel Defoe, Sir John Denham, John Dennis, J. Downes, John Dryden, the Rev.

II. 1701-1745 ⁷⁴					
1. General.....	33	16	6	25	80
2. Latin poetry....	0	0	1	0	1
Anacreontics....	3	0	0	2	5
Pindarics.....	14	1	3	17	35
Regular odes....	2	0	0	7	9
3. <i>Mistress</i> , etc....	5	10	6	18	39
4. <i>Dauides</i>	6	7	1	7	21
5. Plays.....	3	0	0	4	7
6. Prose.....	8	0	0	37	45
Totals.....	74	34	17	117	242

Edmund Elys, Sir John Evelyn, Thomas Flatman, *Gentleman's Journal*, Charles Gildon, Richard Graham, Henry Keepe, Gerard Langbaine, Sir George Mackenzie, the Earl of Mulgrave, John Oldham, Alexander Oldys, the Earl of Orrery, Thomas Otway, Samuel Pepys, Mrs. Katherine Philips, Edward Phillips, Matthew Prior, the Earl of Rochester, Thomas Rymer, Charles Scarborough, Elkanah Settle, Bishop Thomas Sprat, Jonathan Swift, the Rev. Thomas Tanner, Nahum Tate, James Tyrrell, William Walsh, J. Whitehall, William Winstanley, Anthony à Wood, T. Wood, Dr. S. Woodford, William Wotton, Dr. Thomas Yalden, and ten or a dozen anonymous writers.

⁷⁴ This table is based on remarks from the following sources: Joseph Addison, Anne Annesley, *Applebee's Journal*, Joshua Barnes, William Broome, Tom Brown, Eustace Budgell, Edward Bysshe, Lady Mary Chudleigh, the Rev. William Clarke, William Congreve, Mrs. E. Cooper, Sir J. Cotton, W. Coward, John Dennis, William Duncombe, John Dunton, Thomas Ellwood, the Rev. Henry Felton, Elijah Fenton, Henry Fielding (?), Dr. Philip Francis, Richard Friend, *Gentleman's Magazine*, Charles Gildon, *Guardian*, the Rev. Walter Harte, Thomas Hearne, Aaron Hill, John Hughes, David Hume, Lawrence Jackson, Giles Jacob, William King, Dr. Edward Littleton, *London Magazine*, William Melmoth, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Thomas Morell, (the Earl of Mulgrave), John Oldmixon, Major Richardson Pack, William Pattison, Ambrose Philips, Alexander Pope, *Post-Angel*, *Post-Boy*, Matthew Prior, Allan Ramsay, Mrs. Randolph, Jonathan Richardson, Samuel Richardson, the Bishop of Rochester, Richard Steele, Jonathan Swift, *Universal Spectator*, Dr. Isaac Watts, Leonard Welsted, Samuel Wesley, the Countess of Winchelsea, Dr. Thomas Yalden, Edward Young, and seven or eight anonymous writers.

III. 1746-1800 ⁷⁵					
1. General	32	23	35	47	137
2. Latin poetry	9	2	1	8	20
Anacreontics	10	1	0	6	17
Pindarics	4	15	8	18	45
Regular odes	5	4	0	6	15
3. <i>Mistress</i> , etc.	13	13	2	14	42
4. <i>Davidels</i>	0	12	1	8	21
5. Plays	6	0	1	7	14
6. Prose	27	0	0	31	58
Totals	106	70	48	145	369

These tables may be summarized as follows:

In the first period, the general references are overwhelmingly in Cowley's favor. In the second, they are almost counterpoised by the unfavorable, while the non-critical references increase. In the third period, there is a notably greater

⁷⁵ This table is based on remarks from the following sources: Robert Alves, Robert Anderson, *Annual Register*, David E. Baker, the Rev. J. Bannister, Dr. James Beattie, J. Bell, W. Beltcher, Richard Berenger, Dr. Hugh Blair, James Boswell, Mrs. Brooke, Dr. George Campbell, Elizabeth Carter, Theophilus Cibber (Robert Shiels?), William Clarke, *Connoisseur*, William Cowper, William Craig, *Critical Review*, Thos. Davies, Dr. Patrick Delany, Isaac D'Israeli, Robert Dodsley, Dr. James Dunbar, George Ellis, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the Rev. Francis Fawkes, *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oliver Goldsmith, the Rev. James Granger, Thomas Gray, Sir John Hawkins, William Hay, William Hayley, Henry Headley, J. G. Herder, David Hume, the Rev. Joseph Hunter, Bishop Richard Hurd, the Rev. Thomas Janes, Dr. Samuel Johnson, the Rev. John Jones "of Welwyn," Lord Kames, Dr. Andrew Kippis, the Rev. Vicesimus Knox, John Kynaston, the Rev. John Langhorne, *Literary Magazine*, Robert Lloyd, Lord Lyttleton, Mrs. Catharine Macaulay, Henry Mackenzie, *Magazine of Magazines*, Lady Montagu, *Monthly Review*, T. R. Nash, *New and General Biographical Dictionary*, *New Annual Register*, *New Universal Magazine*, John Nichols, John Ogilvie, John Pinkerton, R. Potter, H. J. Pye, Samuel Richardson, Joseph Ritson, John Scott, William Shenstone, Laurence Sterne, William Stukely, William Thompson, Frazer Tytler, Gilbert Wakefield, Horace Walpole, F. G. Waldron, Bishop William Warburton, Joseph Warton, Thomas Warton, John Wesley, Gilbert West, J. Wilkes, William Wordsworth, and six or seven anonymous writers.

number of discriminative references, while the favorable and unfavorable retain about their former relation.

The Latin poetry and Anacreontics are praised in all three periods whenever they are mentioned. Contrary to the common opinion, Cowley's own Pindarics did not, on the whole, come in for their share of the attack which was being made on the other irregular odes until close to the third period, and even then they found defenders.

The *Mistress* and the lyrics were the earliest works to be attacked with much force and conviction; this attack reached its height in the second period, and tended to become somewhat more balanced in the third.

The *Davideis* was generally enjoyed at first, but by the end was almost forgotten by the general public and was universally attacked by the critics.

The plays were never very well known, but the *Cutter* was represented on the stage into the third decade of the eighteenth century, and the opinions of readers were always favorable.

The essays and other prose increased in popularity so rapidly that by the end of the eighteenth century the verdict of Cowley's own contemporaries was completely reversed, and his reputation as one of the English "classics" depended mainly on them, rather than on his poetry.

Abraham Cowley once made the wish to "be forever known." Whether that wish will be fulfilled is still doubtful, but one thing is certain: up to the end of the eighteenth century (and indeed to the present time also) he always had that "inner circle of readers and students" which Grosart claimed for him.

ARTHUR H. NETHERCOT



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